

May 4, 1983

LB 64

SENATOR NEWELL: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I rise to oppose Senator Landis' motion to override the Governor on LB 64. I would like to explain a little bit about why I think that not only is this bill bad policy but it is a somewhat confused issue at this point. Now let me make two points very clear. The first one is that I opposed this bill in committee. I opposed this bill on General File, on Select File, and I voted against it on Final Reading. My opposition to this bill is not based on anything other than the fact that it is a poorly thought out, well intended but poorly thought out, poorly drafted bill that would, in effect, accomplish very little of what Senator Landis wants to accomplish, and when one looks at the way the bill is written today, you will come to realize that the best arguments that Senator Landis had on the floor are gone because the frank truth of this matter is that the argument of stigmatization which was the primary reason for this bill, the primary discussion at the hearing, the primary debate on General File and Select File is in fact gone. What we are doing here with this bill is we are saying, look, in order to pass the bill we had to recognize that certain truths exist and that is that the Welfare Department which has offices in every county in this state, which is spread out and has control of this program for four years, that the Welfare Department is going to continue to administer half of the program, and then we are going to send the rest of the program over to the Department of Energy where they are going to contract out with various people in this circuit rider, in this grand and glorious circuit rider approach, nothing consistent about it at all, but they are going to reach out and grab everybody. You have got to remember that there is no money to grab everybody with but we are going to grab everybody, and the truth of the matter is that you have got to know now in a very stigmatizing situation which you are. Are you on welfare or are you poor? You have got to figure out just exactly who you are to know where you go because if you are on welfare, because if you are on certain aid programs, you have got to go to the Welfare Department, and if you are not, you have got to go to whoever they are contracting out with, generally the CAP agencies, that they are the ones most prominently suggested to provide this service. So what is going to happen folks is that you are going to wait for this great circuit rider coming down, you know riding his pony, and he is going to come down and he is going to say I am here to sign you up, and then he has got to ask you some questions, and pretty soon he is going to say, no, you are going to have to go to the Welfare Department. Or if you go to the Welfare Department, he says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, you misunderstand. You have to go and wait for the circuit rider, the guy on the pony.